



## The Migration Crisis: A Stress Test for European Values

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Confronted by the current refugee crisis, most Member States are turning inwards. But migration will continue to rise in the future. Given that migration is an unstoppable trend, the EU has everything to win from turning this crisis into an opportunity for its own citizens and economy, for the refugees and migrants it hosts and for their countries of origin. The manner in which the EU addresses this challenge will truly prove if it can live up to its founding principles of human dignity, solidarity, freedom, democracy and equality. This policy brief summarises European measures taken in the last few months and proposes four key actions to create a well-framed European migration policy: effectively implementing the principle of solidarity and fair-sharing of responsibility between Member States; creating more legal entry and integration channels; addressing the root causes of migration; and broadcasting a constructive and positive narrative on migration.

Migration is by far the most severe crisis facing Europe today. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker dedicated half his 2015

State of the Union speech to the issue, stating that ‘the first priority today is and must be addressing the refugee crisis’. This crisis touches not only upon European security but also upon all the moral values upon which the EU is founded. The way in which this crisis is addressed will thus truly reveal how the EU lives up to its principles.

Over 2,000 migrants have drowned during the seven first months of 2015 while trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. This makes this sea crossing the deadliest route for migrants in search of a better life.<sup>1</sup> The number of migrants detected at the EU’s borders (mostly in Greece, Italy and Hungary) reached 340,000 in the 2015 January–July period. This represents an increase of 175% compared to the same period in 2014.<sup>2</sup> And yet it does not take into account the people who crossed the border undetected. The number of asylum applications in the EU has increased by 45.2% in 2014 compared to the previous year, with more than 625,000 applicants.<sup>3</sup> And 2015 should definitively break this record. Furthermore, it is estimated that there are about half a million people waiting to attempt the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean from Libya.<sup>4</sup>

These terrible tragedies, combined with what is considered to be the largest exodus since the Second World War, are prompting a reform of the European Migration Policy. But despite the efforts of the European Commission, the short-term measures adopted by European governments in the last few months can be best described by a lack of solidarity and an absence of long-term vision for an issue that will become increasingly important.

With war continuing to plague Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, and given Africa's dismal human rights situation, all exacerbated by climate change that has caused drought in most of these regions, Europe is surrounded by people in despair who have no other choice than to flee in order to preserve their life, liberty and dignity. Although a certain number of illegal migrants travel purely in search of a better economic situation, the majority are genuine refugees. Can we still put ourselves in their shoes while asking ourselves: what would we have done if we were born in their home regions? Human dignity is at stake here. All too often fear takes precedence over compassion and solidarity. As the walls of 'fortress Europe' rise higher, the EU leaves its founding principles of human dignity, solidarity, freedom, democracy, equality and human rights at the door.

There is no national solution to this crisis – only a common European approach can address it effectively. This paper proposes four main recommendations for how the EU can best address this crisis while remaining loyal to its founding principles. The first recommendation is the effective implementation of the principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between Member States as enshrined in the Treaty. The second is providing more legal entry and integration channels for both economic migrants and refugees. The third requires more European assistance to address the external root

causes of migration. The last, and probably the most important, as it is the basis of all the others, is to define and broadcast a positive narrative on migration. While the two first recommendations concern measures that can be taken in the relative short term, the other two are clearly longer-term issues.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY AND FAIR SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN MEMBER STATES**

According to Article 80 of the Lisbon Treaty, the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between Member States shall govern the policies on border checks, asylum and immigration. This principle is the direct consequence of the Schengen Area that established the free movement of persons within the European space. Eliminating internal borders entails a reinforcement of the external border that must be backed by solidarity and a fair sharing of responsibility between Member States. A common approach is thus essential when one knows that a tiny hole in a safety net is sufficient to make it ineffective. The problem today is that the mission of controlling the external border has been mainly left to frontline Member States that no longer have the capacity to manage what is emerging as one of the greatest movements of people in history. As President Juncker rightly said, 'There is not enough Europe in this Union. And there is not enough Union in this Union.'

Consequently, one of the first priorities is to reinforce the resources and mandate of Frontex. Despite the fact that it is the designated EU border agency, Frontex has in reality little power to operate. Under its current mandate, it is restricted to acting as a coordinating agency. In his speech on the 2015 State of the Union, President Juncker said, 'We need to strengthen Frontex significantly and develop it into a fully

operational European border and coast guard system.’ Of course, the removal of national border controls between the Member States of the Schengen area should logically imply a shift of responsibility for external EU borders from national to EU level. However, even if this development is strongly recommended, it is very unlikely to take place in the short-term for political reasons. President Juncker nevertheless announced that the Commission will ‘propose ambitious steps towards a European Border and Coast Guard’ by the end of 2015. This proposal should take into account the following aspects, which are directly linked to the need for more solidarity and responsibility between Member States:

- Frontex’s limited financial resources should be increased in order to cope with the current refugee crisis. The capacities and assets for the Frontex joint operations Triton and Poseidon have already been tripled to some €120 million for the rescue mission and the control of external borders in 2015–2016. But this is not enough. It has ultimately returned the level of funding to what was more or less spent on the Italian-led Mare Nostrum operation alone. This mission ended in November 2014, to be replaced by a cheaper and more limited European operation called Triton. Where Mare Nostrum had a budget of €9 million per month, Triton and Poseidon now have a budget of €10 million per month.<sup>5</sup> Yet the current migration crisis is much more serious than it was two years ago when Mare Nostrum was still ongoing. If Italy alone managed to pay this much per month, it should be possible for the EU as a whole to vastly increase the resources of Frontex joint operations.
- For its rescue missions and its border control operations, Frontex has to count on border guards and heavy assets – such as vessels, planes and motor vehicles – from Member States. The problem is that, despite

the emergency, Member States do not provide enough staff and equipment. Instead of begging Member States to borrow their resources, Frontex should possess its own equipment and employ its own border staff.

- In order to ease the administrative burden placed on Italy and Greece, who have to handle most asylum applications, a hotspot approach coordinated by Frontex, the Commission, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and EUROPOL was agreed in June and implemented in September 2015. This approach consists in the establishment of a platform or hotspot in each of these countries, which will swiftly identify and register migrants and accelerate the return of illegal migrants. Over the long term, other hotspots should be established, starting in Hungary, in order to progressively transfer the responsibility of external borders to the EU.

The EU has been trying to strengthen its Common European Asylum System (CEAS) for years. But harmonising 28 different police and judicial systems is a complicated task. And even when common standards are adopted, it is almost as difficult to implement them in practice. The Dublin III Regulation, which is the central legislation of the CEAS, sets out rules to designate the EU country in charge of examining an asylum application. However, the system was not designed on the basis of the principle of solidarity and responsibility, and the current refugee crisis clearly shows its limits. The European Commission has thus already announced an evaluation of the Dublin Regulation in 2016.

According to the Dublin system, the Member State where the asylum seeker first arrives in the European space is in charge of examining the asylum application, except in cases of family reunification. Once the asylum application is accepted, the refugee will have to reside in the

same Member State. It is only after two years that the long-term residence directive gives a refugee the right to take up residence in another Member State. In practice, this system has led to a chaotic situation where the countries situated at the EU's external borders – particularly Italy, Greece, Malta and Hungary – are taking on most of the burden, while refugees have the obligation to reside in a country they have not chosen. As a result, frontline Member States simply do not want to handle asylum claims any more and tens of thousands migrants are now moving illegally within the EU to reach the country in which they have the greatest potential to integrate.

Each Member State ends up turning inwards. While Hungary completed the construction of a four-meter-high iron curtain on its border with Serbia, the United Kingdom erected fences in Calais to prevent migrants from crossing the Channel, while France reintroduced border control with Italy, just as it did in the Franco-Italian dispute of 2011. These increasing national measures could greatly jeopardise the Schengen Area, which is considered one of the greatest achievements of European integration. The current lack of control on the external borders brings about the reinstatement of internal borders within the Schengen Area.

In order to organise solidarity measures in favour of Italy and Greece, the Council of Ministers of July 2015 agreed to exceptionally relocate 40,000 persons over two years from Italy and Greece to other Member States. Initially, the Commission had proposed a mechanism for allocating these 40,000 persons based on compulsory quotas for every Member State. These quotas would be established by the following criteria: the size of the population, national GDP, unemployment rate, the average number of spontaneous asylum applications received and the number of resettlement places already offered per one million inhabitants over

the period 2010–2014. But Member States did not accept this. Instead, the allocation mechanism took place on a voluntary basis. As a result, Member States failed to meet the relocation target. Only 32,256 relocation places have been offered by Member States so far, despite a commitment to reach the target by December 2015. Hungary was exempted and the United Kingdom and Denmark used their opt-out to avoid participating.

In consideration of the extent of the crisis, heads of states agreed in September 2015 to an additional relocation of 120,000 persons from any Member States exposed to massive migratory flows. This time all Member States committed to participate. Although it is clear that a relocation mechanism on a voluntary basis does not work efficiently, Member States have again failed to commit to the mandatory relocation system proposed by the Commission. The relocation decision has thus been postponed till the next emergency meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 22 September 2015.

In place of all these emergency mechanisms, what is really needed is a recasting of the current Dublin System. In view of the planned evaluation of the system in 2016, here are some elements that should be taken into account. First of all, a common European agency responsible for all asylum applications should be established. Until now, recognition rates between Member States have differed widely: whereas Bulgaria accepted 91% of their asylum applications in the first quarter of 2015, Hungary only accepted 10%.<sup>6</sup> A common EU agency would provide the same procedure conditions for everyone, avoid the abandonment of frontline Member States treating the asylum claims and facilitate the allocation of refugees between the different Member States. A mandatory relocation system should then be implemented. The criteria to set the quotas between Member States proposed by

the Commission and described above to cope with the current refugee crisis are a good basis for this burden-sharing system. However, this proposal totally ignores asylum seekers' preferences in transfer decisions. Furthermore, the Dublin System has shown that imposing asylum seekers on a Member State does not work. The risk of secondary movement would thus be very high if the asylum seeker is transferred to a Member State where he does not have any ties for successful integration. To reduce this risk, asylum seekers should have the possibility of choosing to a certain extent where they want to go. Consequently, each asylum application form should offer the opportunity to indicate up to five countries by order of preference. Each choice should be justified by particular reasons such as family reunification, community ties, language, professional skills and cultural connections. A regularly updated catalogue giving information on each Member State, including its labour market needs, should help the asylum seeker to make his/her choice. If the asylum seeker is accepted as a refugee in his/her first choice Member State, he will get a residence permit to settle in this country. If this Member State has already fulfilled its refugee quota, then the asylum seeker will have to be transferred to their secondary choice country. Eventually, the asylum seeker will have to be placed in one of their five Member States of preference. In accordance with the long-term residence directive, the refugee could still have the opportunity to move to their first choice Member State after two years. Such a system would insure solidarity between Member States, while taking into account the individual preferences of each asylum seeker. However, it would be very difficult to adopt politically among and within Member States.

Another measure to cope with these unusual flows of migrants, particularly in Italy, Greece and Hungary, is the establishment of an EU list of safe countries of origin. Several Member

States have already established their own list but a harmonised approach is needed in order to avoid one Member State becoming more attractive than others. This list should include countries that do not normally produce refugees, but do respect human rights and offer state protection. Citizens coming from a safe country of origin will still have the right to apply for asylum and their applications will be examined on an individual basis. However, their asylum procedures will be simplified and accelerated. This should leave more time to analyse the claims of migrants with a real need of protection, while facilitating the return of citizens from one of these safer countries. Such a measure is necessary in the current situation in order to distinguish quickly between those in need of real protection and those who are trying to enter the EU in search of better economic conditions. The Commission proposed a common list of safe countries of origin in September 2015. This list encompasses the five candidate countries for EU accession (Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) and the two potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo). Other countries may be added in the future.

Finally, what is needed above all is a real commitment from Member States to take their responsibility vis à vis the surge of asylum-seekers. Yet, since the beginning of this crisis we have witnessed increasingly selfish behaviour from Member States. Even countries like Sweden and Denmark, which for decades have been known for their openness and tolerance, are now changing their attitudes towards migrants and refugees, mainly under the influence of far-right anti-immigrant parties. This being said, Sweden remains the Member State that hosts by far the greatest number of asylum seekers, with 8,432 asylum applications per one million inhabitants received in 2014. Hungary, Austria and Malta come just after with

4,331, 3,299 and 3,174 asylum applications respectively per one million inhabitants in 2014.<sup>7</sup> But these figures are certainly not the result of their openness – on the contrary. It is their geographical positions that force asylum seekers to pass through their territories. Germany is often considered an example of responsibility and solidarity because it voluntarily accepts a large number of asylum seekers. In 2014, it received 2,511 asylum applications per one million inhabitants. In 2015, this figure is set to rise to some 10,000 asylum claims per one million inhabitants. Despite this great lesson of humanity, one must not forget that Germany is an affluent country that needs labour forces to guarantee its continuing growth. As regards the United Kingdom, there is a huge difference between its alleged ‘soft touch’ on migration and its actual practice. In 2014, it accepted only 497 asylum applications per one million inhabitants. As for the Visegrad States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia), they are much clearer in their migration policy. In September the four countries published a communiqué in which they clearly rejected refugee quotas. Their objective is clear: keep migrants out of their countries.<sup>8</sup> In 2014, Poland received only 211 asylum applications per one million inhabitants, the Czech Republic 110 and Slovakia 61.<sup>9</sup> However, it is important to be aware of the hypocrisy imbuing national arguments. The different reactions of Member States towards asylum seekers not only derive from their degree of tolerance, openness and compassion, they are also the result of various national factors such as their capacity to integrate the latter, their need of labour forces or their general economic situation.

This crisis represents an opportunity for political vision and courage to overcome the fear of losing voters. A CEAS based on the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between Member States must be further developed, while providing more legal channels

for both refugees and migrants, as outlined in the next recommendation.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: PROVIDING MORE LEGAL ENTRY AND INTEGRATION CHANNELS FOR BOTH ECONOMIC MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

It is only through legal measures that the entry and integration of both migrants and refugees can be well-managed in the EU and its Member States. If they could benefit from coherent and effective legal channels, particularly for work, this could unleash the huge potential of migration for the EU, the migrants/refugees and their origin countries, creating a triple-win situation.

For the EU and its Member States, the advantages are numerous. The European labour force is ageing and beginning to shrink. According to the European Commission, the EU will move from four working-age persons (aged 15–64 years) for every person aged over 65 to about two working-age persons during the period 2013–2060.<sup>10</sup> Working migrants, including asylum seekers, are young people who could ease the debts of national budgets and the pressure on national social security systems. Moreover, migrants and refugees are usually driven and hungry people with great potential for entrepreneurship and innovation. They also enrich our societies through their cultures and languages.<sup>11</sup> Last but not least, the development of legal immigration should help reduce illegal migration pressure. Regarding the personal development of the migrant/refugee, working not only helps them to integrate, but also improves their standard of living, expands their skills and qualifications, and keeps them out of trouble. As for the countries of origin, they benefit from significant remittances equivalent to almost four times the official development aid,<sup>12</sup> new investments, knowledge and technology transfers.

*For economic migrants*

First of all, to improve the current situation for economic migrants, the EU should harmonise the conditions of entry and residence to exercise an economic activity. Although the Commission made a proposal concerning this in 2001, it has never been discussed by Member States. The latter prefer to keep their sovereignty over admission in order to compete with each other to attract certain categories of third-country workers. Therefore, whatever the existing common European migration rules might be, the national systems always prevail when deciding whether or not to allow the entry of migrants or issuance of a residence permit. Consequently, the European blue card system that set out various conditions for non-EU high-skilled workers to work and live in the EU is rarely used. In 2013, 15,261 Blue Cards were distributed in the EU, with more than 90% in Germany.<sup>13</sup> By refusing a common European approach that would greatly simplify procedures, Member States reduce the EU's attractiveness to economic migrants versus other regions in the world. However, harmonising the conditions of entry and residence of economic migrants would not deprive Member States of their sovereignty over admission. They would still decide on applications. This is how the current system of short-term visas works. Although such a harmonisation is not impossible, it would nevertheless be complicated to adopt politically as most Member States want to keep their national appeal for migrants.

The European Commission will propose a legal migration package at the beginning of 2016. This package will comprise a modernisation of the Blue Card Scheme, a platform for dialogue with social partners on economic migration, stronger action to link migration with development policy, prioritised funding for integration policies and cheaper, faster and safer remittance transfers.<sup>14</sup>

This package could mark the opportunity to propose a common residence permit and a Blue Card valid in all Member States, increasing the incentive for workers to come to the EU. Until now, non-EU long-term residents (those staying in the EU for over five years) and Blue Card holders have needed a new resident permit/Blue Card each time they move into another Member State. If we want a single European labour market, free movement of persons should apply to everyone: EU citizens, non-EU long-term residents and Blue Card holders.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of integration, migrants suffer from downward professional mobility, i.e., they find themselves in a lower professional condition than the one they had in their origin country. Support measures for links in our educational systems and facilitation of job accession and promotion are therefore needed.

Finally, if we want migrants to become active social partners, we should foster their political representation. Many Member States including France, Germany, Poland and Italy still do not grant the right to vote to non-EU long-term residents. Even in Member States where long-term residents have the right to vote, the representation of migrants in national public institutions is too often low.

*For asylum seekers and refugees*

In order to avoid the terrible and dangerous journey a refugee has to undertake to reach Europe, the European Council of June committed to a €50 million resettlement programme lasting two years to transfer 20,000 refugees to Europe directly from their origin countries (Syria and Eritrea) or a transit country (Lebanon). Under the initial Commission proposal, the overall pledged resettlement places should have been distributed among EU Member States according to the same mandatory relocation system used in the emergency relocation scheme. But it has not

been accepted by Member States and the participation in the resettlement programme remains on a voluntary basis. Among the 20,000 refugees, Germany and France take the most with respectively 10,500 and 6,752. Thanks to this programme, people in need of protection arrive safely by airplane and legally, with their refugee status established in advance. The immigration routes have become increasingly dangerous. The range of threats includes drowning, abandonment by corrupt smugglers and violent repressive measures by European border patrols. These European and national resettlement schemes should thus be enlarged. Member States should accept a minimum number of refugees on the basis of a mandatory relocation EU scheme that could be completed by additional national contributions. This would show solidarity towards those who suffer, before they arrive in Europe with the additional affliction of the journey.

A second measure to allow asylum seekers to arrive safely in Europe is to lift visa requirements for asylum seekers coming from origin countries in clear need of international protection. By the end of 2015, the Commission will have concluded its review of which nationalities require visas.<sup>16</sup> This could become an opportunity to lift visa requirements for Syria, Eritrea and Iraq and other countries in very clear need of international protection. This measure would at least greatly help asylum seekers in possession of a valid passport.

In order to improve the integration of asylum seekers, access to work should be accelerated and better framed. According to the Directive 2013/33/EU, which has applied since July 2015, asylum seekers should have access to the labour market no later than nine months after arrival.<sup>17</sup> However, in practice, access remains difficult. The main obstacles are language learning and the recognition of professional qualifications. Often language courses lead only to a basic

knowledge. In France, for example, courses take refugees only to A2 level. Qualified asylum seekers have a second problem: they have difficulties in proving their qualifications and experience. This often leads to downward professional mobility.<sup>18</sup> There are already some pilot projects in place to accelerate access to labour market. In Germany, for example, the programme 'Early Intervention' offers qualified migrants with high recognition rates an access to the labour market directly after asylum application.<sup>19</sup> Sharing best practices between Member States should be a first step to improving integration. In the long term, we should also think about a new European agency harmonising national integration policies.

Access to education, including higher education, should be improved. The same directive (2013/33/EU) states that access to education for minor refugees shall not be postponed for more than three months. Education should be provided in accommodation centres.<sup>20</sup> However, even if it is difficult for teachers, it is preferable when education takes place in normal schools directly after arrival to favour integration as early as possible. A major problem is access to higher education. Universities have strict language and diploma requirements for entry. The Kiron University is a new, innovative project offering free higher education online to refugees and displaced people in Germany without language and diploma requirements at the time of enrolment.<sup>21</sup> The EU should financially support such innovative projects in Member States.

In conclusion, the current refugee crisis and the upcoming demographic crisis in Europe should urge our policymakers to adopt more efficient, fair and harmonised legal entry and integration measures for both migrants and refugees. Not acting would lead to suboptimal results and harmful effects, whereas a well-managed migration can become a win-win situation at all levels.

### RECOMMENDATION 3: ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF MIGRATION

The measures adopted by the European Council in June and the Council of Interior Ministers in July and September are mostly short-term solutions. The first objective is to manage the crisis. It is nevertheless essential not to forget the root causes of migration, and to act on them. In the Conclusions of the European Council, development aid is not the most important point of cooperation with third countries. For the European heads of state, an effective return policy of illegal migrants is far more salient. The Council of Interior Ministers launched the operation EUNAVFOR Med to save lives by disrupting criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers. This operation will perhaps prevent some people crossing the Mediterranean, but certainly not solve their original problems. If we really want to prevent them coming to Europe we have to address the root causes of migration. This is a huge challenge. Many of the root causes of migration lie in global issues that the EU has been trying to address for many years.

Wars, religious persecutions, interethnic tensions and political repression are the first push factors of migration. Scattered as the EU is, it is unable to deal with such external situations of chaos and can only endure the consequences. That is why the EU should reinforce its Common Foreign and Security Policy and learn to speak with one voice on the global scene.

Another important reason for migration is poverty. Development aid for education, access to health care, hunger and poverty eradication are absolutely essential. Together with its Member States, the EU is the largest donor worldwide, spending €58.2 billion on official development assistance in 2014.<sup>22</sup> But on average, Member States fall far short of meeting the Millennium Development Goal. While they have committed themselves to support

developing countries with 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) annually, the European average for Official Development Assistance (ODA) was only 0.42% of GNI in 2014.<sup>23</sup> According to the UN, 0.7% of developed countries' GNI can provide enough resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals, but developed countries must follow through on commitments and begin increasing ODA volumes today. The European Commission proposal to implement an Emergency Trust Fund for Africa of about €1.8 billion is a first step in the right direction. This Trust Fund is designated for addressing the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration by promoting economic and equal opportunities, security and development.

Climate change is also becoming one of the main root causes of migration. For instance, three major food crises caused by drought have pushed more and more people from the Sahel zone to flee their homes.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Mali, Senegal and Eritrea were among the six most represented nations among people arriving in Italy in the first quarter of 2015.<sup>25</sup> The impact of climate change is also one of the main reasons behind the war in Syria and the rise of the Islamic State, which have created millions of refugees today. Between 2006 and 2011, a severe drought created more than one million food-insecure people, pulling them into cities. The government's mismanagement of this food crisis was one of the factors that led to the current violent civil war.<sup>26</sup> The consequences of climate change are thus very often interlinked with the two other causes of migration. The push for a strong global climate agreement by the end of 2015 and reinforcement of cooperation on climate issues with developing countries has never been more urgent.

Ultimately, the explanation of the increasing surge of migrants in the EU and in the world today is to be found in the current state of the

planet, which reflects the conscience of humanity. The root causes of migration are the syndromes of the impact of human actions on the world: war, pollution, globalisation, stress on natural resources, global warming, governance deficit and a rise in intolerance. These are huge challenges for humanity to address, requiring a profound change of individual behaviours and a new system of global governance based on an inter-civilisation dialogue. Avoiding short-term decisions, Europeans must have the courage to begin forging a comprehensive long-term vision.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: DEVELOPING AND SPREADING A CONSTRUCTIVE NARRATIVE ON MIGRATION**

According to a Eurobarometer special survey conducted by the European Commission in July 2015, migration is currently the number one concern of European citizens, before economic issues and unemployment. This concern is mostly the result of fear of migrants, increasingly fed by populist parties. The creation of a positive narrative is thus essential to make this new reality acceptable to people.

The rise of populist parties in the EU has resulted to a large extent from the recent surge of migrants in the EU. These parties propose a 'one size fits all' concept: no legal or illegal migrants in our country. All the benefits of migration are swept out and replaced by a discourse based on fear. But fear is usually destructive. It is a mental construction and a contagious feeling that ends up making virtual problems real. By removing from their discourse all sense of compassion and humanity, they leave the door open to the worst barbarism, as history has proved. Of course, most of the dangers these parties envisage are real, but the amalgams and overstatements they make from them are much more dangerous.

No, not all refugees are terrorists! It is clear, however, that security measures and the

monitoring of jihadist groups need to be stepped up. But, with few exceptions, asylum seekers have IS, al-Qaeda and the Taliban as common enemies. And neither are all economic migrants job thieves. Although they might bring down local wages in some sectors, they are, above all, the labour force Europe needs to face its demographic crisis. Most of them are even 'exceptional people', as characterised by migration specialist Ian Goldin. Unusually driven by all the dangers they have endured, they greatly contribute to the pool of entrepreneurs, innovators and risk-takers. Not all migrants are freeloaders wanting benefits for which they have not paid, either. Even if some might benefit from the national social systems, altogether they contribute positively to state finances and social security systems. In the future, they will be the ones paying our pensions. Nor will migrants completely change our European culture. Even if migration has positive and negative disruptive effects, it is most of all an unavoidable phenomenon as old as humanity itself. Who can pretend to be the pure descendent of the original inhabitants of their country? Throughout history, well-managed migration has globally done nothing other than trigger growth and open ever-greater possibilities. Einstein, Freddie Mercury and Steve Jobs come all from migrant families!

It is clear that Europe cannot take care of all the misery of the world. However, it is important to underline that so far refugees represent only 0.11% of the total European population.<sup>27</sup> When comparing the number of Syrian refugees in the EU and in Syria's neighbouring countries, the difference is striking. Whereas the EU counts 281,452 Syrian refugees with declared asylum<sup>28</sup> for more than 500 million inhabitants, Turkey has received more than 1.8 million Syrians among a domestic population of 78.5 million.<sup>29</sup> In Lebanon the situation is even worse: Syrian refugees alone represent 25% of the national population.<sup>30</sup> It is, of course, important to

mention that the EU provides most of the recovery assistance to these countries with generous donations<sup>31</sup> and that obviously the EU does not have the same proximity to Syria as Turkey or Lebanon. However, the disproportion of inflows is so big that one cannot help thinking that the EU is definitely not doing the most it can, and that money – despite its great utility – is not also the most convenient way to help.

European and national politicians face the challenge of engaging in a well-balanced debate on migration and integration. It is essential to make people realise that, as explained in recommendation two, everybody gains from a well-managed migration: the EU as a whole, the migrant and the origin country. While not falling into easy populist discourses, politicians must also not dodge the challenges of living in a cosmopolitan and diverse society. This challenge implies integration, to which citizens can greatly contribute. Finally, politicians must not let the fear of losing voters guide their actions. This is what Angela Merkel did when standing before placards accusing her of being the ‘people’s traitor’, she said ‘There can be no tolerance for those who question the dignity of other people.’

The media also has a huge role to play by taking over intelligent narratives and facts to refute and challenge populists’ simple discourses. Journalists should be encouraged to visit accommodation centres, EU borders, transit and origin countries in order to report stories from asylum seekers, refugees, migrants but also coast guards, rescue staff and civil society groups and individuals directly confronted with the crisis. European resources should be deployed in order to help them to promote a constructive narrative.

Politicians and their voters now have to make a choice. Every individual’s judgment on how to react to the migrants’ arrival in Europe is somehow an examination of their human

conscience. In his State of the Union 2015 speech, President Juncker said, ‘We can build walls, we can build fences. But imagine for a second it were you, your child in your arms, the world you knew torn apart around you. There is no price you would not pay, there is no wall you would not climb, no sea you would not sail, no border you would not cross if it is war or the barbarism of the so-called Islamic State that you are fleeing.’<sup>32</sup>

Migration is here to stay and will continue to rise in the future. People should be aware that all solutions that reverse this situation are illusions. There is no middle way. The choice is between erecting walls and fences, constructing many detention centres, arranging mass deportations to origin countries and surrendering to the fear of the other, or finding a way of developing tolerance and openness while doing everything possible to ease the natural fears and apprehensions of EU citizens.<sup>33</sup>

It is by being confronted with diversity and critical situations that individuals challenge their assumptions and learn who they are. The stakes of this refugee crisis are thus much higher than the practical aspects: Europe could lose its soul by failing to live up to its founding values and principles. As rightly said by President Juncker, ‘These principles are inscribed in our laws and our Treaties but I am worried that they are increasingly absent from our hearts.’<sup>34</sup> Member States, politicians and European citizens have to understand that a well-managed migration based on responsibility and solidarity is a great opportunity for all.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Flavio Di Giacomo, ‘Deadly Milestone as Mediterranean Migrant Deaths Pass 2,000’, International Organisation for Migration, 8 August 2015, available online: [HTTP://WWW.IOM.INT/NEWS/DEADLY-MILESTONE-MEDITERRANEAN-MIGRANT-DEATHS-PASS-2000](http://www.iom.int/news/deadly-milestone-mediterranean-migrant-deaths-pass-2000)

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